[1] p. 135, but it may be noted that Bailey clearly did not know of the existence of *shamanistic* ceremonies and we have little doubt that the information given him, which he took to refer to dreams, in fact described the experiences of possession. The "few sticks...with a branch thrown over them" are clearly remains of the stones upon which the offerings are placed.

715 753 The *Mâsha Yakhse* are the spirits of old Yezîdi women, the chief of whom is the Mâsha Kirîsanna, who, as Bailey pointed out in 1889, is more feared than loved, and in many cases is supposed to send sickness. It was said that her name was Anani and that she lived at Ghogah near Aintawarra, dying of old age; but in spite of these circumstantial details, which are perhaps due to the teachings of Tâwûsenî, neither the cave nor the memory of her husband has survived.

715 Unqune Kirîsanna is another important *Mâsha Yakhsi* who lived near Unqune[1].

Unqune Kirîsanna also gives luck in honey getting, and it is thought that she in some way causes bees to build good combs, in fact, all the *Mâsha Yakhse* are associated with rich honey from the belief that they especially affect the rocky crests of hills[2].

Although the *Mâsha Yakhse* are looked upon as the spirits of old Yezîdi women and are reputed to show their fondness for children by kidnapping them, they are regarded with considerable awe, for they are considered to send diseases, and it is necessary to make an offering to them in order that this may be removed. This is generally done at the *Jashnashwe* ceremony described on p. 262. With the exception of the

[1] She is known to the jungle Shêkhâns of the Yezîdîs, who once lived with her husband Unqune Khire Wânîgu she made the Unqune pebbly fields. She is particularly honoured by barren women, and those who have brought forth stillborn children, for because of curds and milk, to prevent curds being taken by leopards or damaging the crops and to give good harvests.

[2] Offerings of honey made to the *Mâsha Yakhse* are described elsewhere. The belief that the *Mâsha Yakhse* are especially associated with hills is also found among the Shêkhâns of the Yezîdî country, who especially associate these spirits with hill springs which are found on or on which streams arise. One such hill near Bîlgah, which at the end of the rains has many small streams running down its face, is known as Yakhsi Kîs and is especially associated by the neighbouring Shêkhâns with the *Mâsha Yakhse*, who they say can be heard moaning about the area at night.

8: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

[pp. 21-33 not processed]

CHAPTER IV

VILLAGE VEDDAS AND JUNGLE SHRINES

And here were forests ancient as the hills
Enclosing sunny spots of greenery

COLERIDGE

I. THE EMBRACE OF THE TREES

13 131 361 Buried in the jungle ten miles north-west of Maha Oya lies the old Vedda village of Omuna. Forest, unbroken by the meanest glade, intervenes between. At a pool we flush a brace of bronze-winged pigeons or set a-chirruping a covey of small birds; while every now and then the scurry of unseen feet tells that the woods are live with game. Jungles darken early; by five-thirty a cathedral gloom creeps to the songs of roosting birds: the shama throats a rambling lay, the grubbing pitta sounds a shrill call, the cuckoo wakes, like a curfew, the forest echoes, "while like a long-roll drummer the night-jar thrills the treen."

It is all but dark when, through a break in the trees, the hill of Omuna stands before us; and the clamour of resenting dogs and a welcoming fire tell us we have reached the limit of an arduous walk.

13 823 Where the Vedda is, there is the inevitable rock. The tie between them is intimate. To the life, animal and tree, on the timbered sides of the hill the Vedda is beholden for sustenance. The boulder-bound stream gives him water, and there lurk demons watchful for his undoing, and tutelary ancestral spirits. Nowhere is the relation between men and rock closer than at Omuna; for from the heart of the hill flows a spring that does not fail in the cruellest drought. Is it a wonder the place has for ages been 144 favoured of the Veddas? But time the iconoclast breaks the oldest bonds; the half-Veddas* there to-day are not of the ancient stock; that died out some fifteen years ago.

000 Besides its association with the wild men, Omuna has other claims to interest. Like many another forest stronghold it is the site of ancient Buddhistic ruins—frescoed caves and headless, chest-battered Buddhas despoiled by treasure-hunters. What induced the priests of old-time to seek such sanctuaries as this, it is hard to surmise; religious persecution perhaps, by their inveterate foes the Sivaite Tamils; or merely the claims of austere devotion. Be that as it may, it was in these fastnesses that the light of Buddhism was nursed when it flickered low, till, happening

*There is almost certainly no Vedda living to-day without Sinhalese blood in his veins. The term *half-Vedda* therefore may appear superfluous, but is used to designate Veddas who have intermarried with the Sinhalese and settled down to agricultural pursuits, the word *Vedda* being used for the wilder folk that depend mainly on the jungle for sustenance.

[p. 34]

5: Spitzel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

triangle bounded on the south by the Gal Oya: on the west by the Bibile-Batticaloa road; and on the east by the coast road. Within this space are found the Veddas of Danigala, Henebedda and Bingoda, besides the few about Kotelinda, Divulana and Serangamadu. If to this tract were added that to the west and north of the Bibile-Batticaloa road, between it and the Mahaweli-ganga, we shall have embraced the Veddas of Bintenne, Gunner's Quoin, and other scattered settlements, and accounted for every Vedda extant—a mere handful of people in all.

Kaurala of Kotelinda was the first Vedda worthy of the name we had encountered on this long journey. He was a Bingoda Vedda of the Morana *warige*, but had spent most of his days at Bandaradua now derelict. He lived with his family in a crude hut in the jungle; his sole weapons were an axe, a bow and arrows. He was a simple soul, laughing uproariously at one moment, and the next assuming that troubled gravity so characteristic of his race. He knew every inch of his jungles; there was no tree, stream, or stone once passed which he could not instantly recognise again. This instinct and the sun were his sole means of orientation. We tried to press him into service, but he refused. "How can I come?" he said, tossing head and arms like a windmill. "I am a lone man. I live in the jungle. I am only a Vedda. If I go, who is there to look after my children? See here, now," pointing to the damaged trees about his hut; "this is what the *botukandas** have done. How can I come?"

Our deviation to Kotelinda was in vain. We had hoped to cut across the hills of Madana to Galmede; but the path had long been absorbed into the forest. We had therefore to double back to Bokkebedda, and thence strike north, through Gonagalla, to Divulana. With our usual ill-luck on this trip, we caught our fifth thunderstorm. It dropped plumb on us and worried us all the way; while in the unscathed beyond, over the treed parkland, the sunset wrought a panorama of opal and pearl, touching to glory the austere peak of Friar's Hood, queen of the distant hills.

*Elephants.